

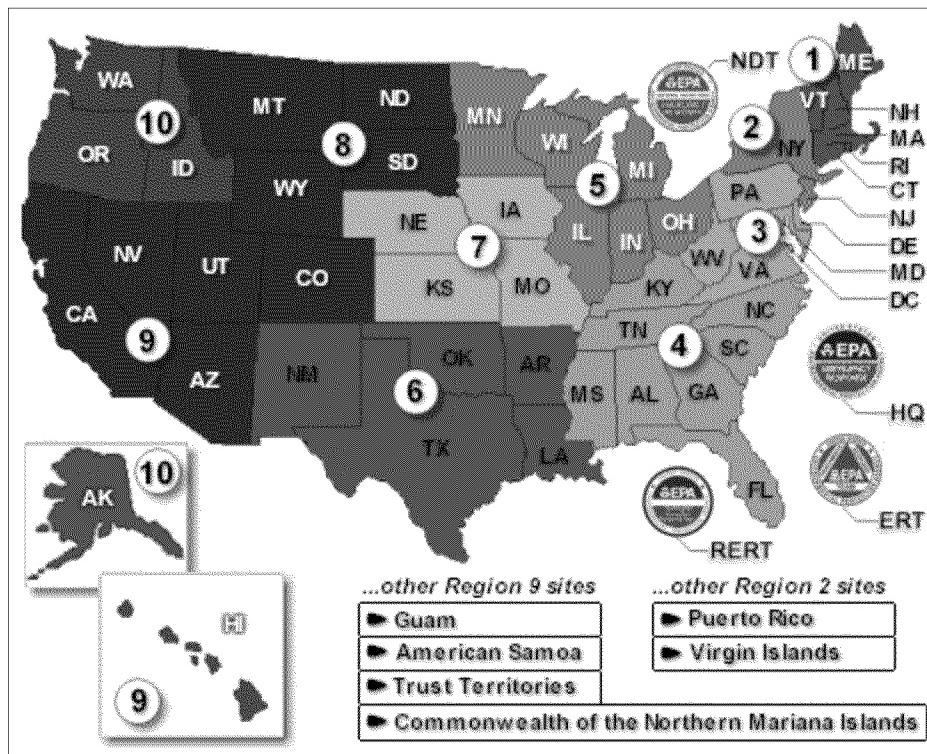
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER WATCH OFFICER PROGRAM AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES



Updated: March 19, 2015

EPA Regions



Regional Coordinators

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
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Table of Contents

1.0 Document Purpose and Organization.....	4
2.0 Introduction.....	4
2.1 Overview of Watch Officer.....	4
2.1.1 Qualifications/Requirements.....	5
2.1.2 Selection Procedures.....	6
2.1.3 Training.....	6
2.2 Watch Officer Station Overview.....	6
2.2.1 EOC Hours of Operation.....	7
3.0 Scheduling.....	7
3.1 Annual Scheduling.....	7
3.2 Weekly Rotations.....	8
3.2.1 Schedule Changes.....	8
3.3 Guaranteed Coverage at the EOC.....	9
4.0 Watch Officer SOPs.....	9
4.1 DTWO Officer Responsibilities.....	10
4.1.1 Initial Responsibilities.....	10
4.1.2 Ongoing Responsibilities.....	10
4.1.3 Closing Procedures.....	11
4.2 AHWO/SWO Responsibilities.....	11
4.2.1 Initial Responsibilities.....	11
4.2.2 Ongoing Responsibilities.....	11
4.2.3 Closing Responsibilities.....	13

1.0 Document Purpose and Organization

This standard operating procedures (SOPs) manual serves as operating guidance for Watch Officers (WOs) in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Headquarters' (HQ) Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The SOPs are organized in a user-friendly manual to assist WOs in the performance of their duties. By following the guidance described in this manual, the EOC WOs can ensure both effective information management and that the appropriate internal Agency personnel are notified of incidents in a timely manner.

This manual is a comprehensive resource for WO responsibilities, providing procedures to help WOs communicate and manage information effectively. Specifically, this manual outlines:

- Overview of WO activities;
- Overview of WO station;
- Staffing, qualifications, training, and rotations;
- SOPs outlining the responsibilities of Day-time WOs (DTWOS);
- SOPs outlining the responsibilities of After-hours WOs (AHWOS);
- Checklists;
- Job aids; and
- Important contact information.

The responsibilities of DTWOS and AHWOS are divided into the following three time periods:

- Initial procedures - responsibilities that the WO will perform at the beginning of their shift;
- Ongoing procedures - responsibilities that the WO will continuously perform throughout their shift; and
- Closing procedures - responsibilities that the WO will perform at the end of their shift.

Job aids are detailed descriptions of how to perform tasks associated with WO responsibilities. Because of the distinct working environment, some Job aids are divided between DTWO and AHWO. The appendices contain supplemental information, such as contact lists.

******For this manual and unless otherwise noted, the designee for the Preparedness and Response Operations Division (PROD) Director is the Chief, Emergency Operations and Continuity Branch (ECB Chief)******

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Overview of Watch Officer

The EPA EOC WOs maintain situational awareness of incidents within the United States and internationally as needed, involving oil and hazardous substances, including chemical, petroleum, radiological, and biological materials. The WOs monitor the 24-hour EOC phone, which typically serves as the first point of contact in the EOC notification process. Incidents requiring follow-up and additional notification will be passed to the appropriate Regional Coordinator (RC) or back-up RC by the WOs, when appropriate.

Because each incident is unique, the actions and steps outlined in the SOPs must be both flexible and responsive to the incident. WOs elevate an incident when it is significant enough to warrant an increased

level of notification and the generation of additional reports. Additionally, the available information and guidance within this document may not always lead the WOs to a definitive course of action. Therefore, the WO is expected to be flexible, perform tasks simultaneously, and exercise their best professional judgment in providing information to the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and others.

There are two distinct WO shifts (although they do have some overlap):

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1) Day-time Watch Officer (DTWO) | During normal operations, the WO on duty in the EOC while it is operational with aid from an AHWO, who also serves as a Senior Watch Officer (SWO). |
| 2) After-hours Watch Officer (AHWO) | During the After-hours shift, the AHWO is responsible for performing their responsibilities off-site, at an alternate duty station (e.g., normally at home) when the EOC is closed. The AHWO is the same as the SWO for purposes of these SOPs. |

The DTWO shift will cover normal EOC operational hours of 0800 to 1700 EST, while the AHWO/SWO will maintain physical presence during the core hours of 0900 to 1600 EST to assist the DTWO in EOC activities. During these core hours, AHWO/SWO duties include functions such as decision-making and review of DTWO-prepared EOC products, liaising with interagency operations centers and the Agency's emergency management community, representing the EOC at meetings and conferences, handling initial requests for national assets (e.g., Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT), Portable High Throughput Integrated Laboratory Identification Systems (PHILIS), Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA), etc.), and other duties beyond the responsibilities and capabilities of the standing DTWO to handle notifications and maintain situational awareness. AHWO duty hours beyond the core hours are handled off-site at an alternate duty stations (e.g., normally at home).

2.1.1 Qualifications/Requirements

All WOs participating in the rotation must have the following qualifications:

- Supervisory approval;
- A minimum of three days shadowing current WOs;
- A demonstrable understanding of EPA HQ's emergency response call evaluation and decision-making processes;
- A full understanding of these SOPs;
- A minimum of Incident Command System (ICS) 100- and 200-level training;
- A working knowledge of EPA's authorities and responsibilities under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)/Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), the Clean Water Act (CWA)/Oil Pollution Act of 1990 (OPA 90), the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and the National Response Framework (NRF); and
- Regular attendance at WO meetings and training events.

AHWOS must have the following qualifications to be eligible to participate in the AHWO rotation group:¹

¹ As amended by the HQ EOC AHWO Standby Program memo, April 2007.

- A minimum of one year served as a DTWO;
- Supervisory approval;
- An alternate duty station (i.e., residence) with full access to communication and technical resources; and
- Ability to remain stationed during duty hours at his/her alternate duty station.

The AHWO/SWO is an experienced WO with the following qualifications:

- A minimum of one year experience serving as a DTWO;
- A working knowledge of AHWO procedures;
- Experience providing support to the EOC for at least one incident activation;
- An understanding of initial activation processes for the EOC; and
- Experience providing training in an EOC setting.

2.1.2 Selection Procedures

The OEM PROD Director and Emergency Operations and Continuity (ECB) Branch Chief oversees the WO Program. The PROD Director (or designee) is responsible for selecting WOs, establishing the DTWO and AHWO/SWO rotations, and ensuring that rotations are distributed in an equitable fashion.

- DTWOS – a combination of OEM and other EPA staff who have been approved by the PROD Director (or designee) and the ECB Branch Chief.
- AHWOs - composed primarily of PROD staff.² Six AHWO positions are filled by PROD staff. Two AHWO positions are made up of personnel from other OEM Divisions upon authorization from their managers and the PROD Director. The AHWO will maintain core hours of 0900 to 1600 EST. The AHWO will be designated by, and reports to, the PROD Director (or designee) and ECB Chief during their rotation week.

For the list of current WOs, see *Appendix C: Regional Coordinators and Watch Officer Contacts*.

2.1.3 Training

Training on EOC WO equipment and procedures is provided on a semi-annual basis or as needed.

2.2 Watch Officer Station Overview

The EOC is, by definition and design, the physical location where EPA HQ personnel will assemble to coordinate HQ response activities. The EOC is designed to provide a flexible configuration that is fully equipped with audiovisual and information technology (IT) equipment dedicated for use by emergency response personnel as part of daily operations and immediately available to support response actions. See the *EOC Comprehensive Guide* for detailed information on the EOC capabilities, resources, and layout at: <http://intranet.epa.gov/eoc/>.

Of primary importance to the WOs is the WO station within the EOC. The WO station contains all of the necessary communications resources required during the performance of his/her duties. The WO station resources and capabilities include, but are not limited to:

- Two computer workstations with access to the EPA intranet, EOC network drive, EOC email in-

² Same as above.

- box and calendar, and internet;
- Immediate access to printers, fax machines, and the EOC telephone lines (i.e., 202-564-3850 and 202-564-8722);
- Radio systems, including the National Warning System (NAWAS) and EPA High Frequency (HF) Radio System;
- Satellite phone; and
- A small library containing chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) reference material, policy and procedure manuals, and maps.

Immediately adjacent to the WO station is the IT staff, who can assist the WOs with any of the IT or audiovisual resources.

To maintain consistency in terminology as prescribed by the NRF and **NIMS**, EOC operations have been structured utilizing principles of ICS. Upon activation of the EOC during an incident or event, an EOC Manager will be established along with other Command and General Staff, as appropriate.

2.2.1 EOC Hours of Operation³

- During normal operations:
 - The EOC is operational and physically staffed Monday through Friday from 0700 hours to 1730 hours EST.
 - The EOC is not physically staffed during off hours or on federal holidays.
- During response operations or elevated threat levels:
 - The EOC will be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or as determined by the EOC Manager (or designee).

3.0 Scheduling

3.1 Annual Scheduling

The WO schedule is a 48-week cycle. The PROD Director (or designee) will set up a planning meeting with the WOs, at a minimum, eight weeks prior to the end of the current cycle to allow WOs as much time as possible for personal and professional scheduling considerations. This planning meeting will include an explanation of the DTWO and AHWO/SWO scheduling process, how holidays are shared among staff, and a briefing of WO responsibilities, in general.

No more than eight qualified staff members will be chosen to fulfill AHWO duties during the 48-week cycle. Each of the AHWOs/SWOS will serve for six one-week rotations throughout the year. During the planning meeting, the entire annual DTWO and AHWO/SWO schedule is completed.

To provide maximum flexibility for the AHWO/SWO, an Out-of-Turn Volunteer (OTV) policy has been built into the staffing system. An OTV is a member who will serve outside of his/her designated turn on a rotation cycle to fill any necessary open spot. OTVs will be identified by a voluntary process based on availability and willingness to perform AHWO/SWO duty outside of their pre-designated cycle(s). Previous AHWO/SWO performance (e.g., adherence to policies and procedures) will be considered by the PROD Director for eligibility of OTV candidates.

³ As defined in EPA EOC SOP 1-EOC Hours of Operations.

3.2 Weekly Rotations

The DTWO duty rotation begins on Monday and ends on Friday, spanning 0800 to 1700 EST hours each day. DTWO rotations do not include federal holidays.

The AWHO/SWO maintains, at a minimum, core hours of 0900 to 1600 EST in the EOC. An effort will be made to avoid scheduling an AHWO/SWO rotation week over the employee's compressed work week (if applicable). In such cases, the PROD Director or designee will be responsible for finding a substitute AHWO/SWO in advance of the compressed work week day. Flexiplace (or telework) should not be utilized by a AHWO/SWO during their scheduled AHWO rotation week as AHWO duties require physical presence in the EOC.

The AHWO duty rotation begins on Thursday at 1730 EST and ends on Thursday morning at 0700 EST of the following week. The AHWO rotation includes the following times:

- Weekday night shift (i.e., Monday – Friday, overnight from 1730 – 0700 EST);
- Weekends (i.e., the full 48-hour period comprising Saturday and Sunday);
- Federal holidays (i.e., the full 24-hour period); and
- Periods of irregular office closings for inclement weather, early dismissals, or other office closing authorized by the Agency.

In the case of irregular office closings, whether pre-scheduled or unplanned, it is the responsibility of the AHWO that is currently on duty during that closure to ensure that all hours are covered.

See *Appendix B: Watch Officer Schedule* for the current WO rotation.

3.2.1 Schedule Changes

DTWOS should make every effort to meet their day-time watch commitments. All changes to a DTWO's original schedule should be an even-trade of time (e.g., swapping one full week for another full week), unless they are supporting a response to a catastrophic incident (i.e., spill or incident of national significance). Changes that are not even-trades must be approved by the PROD Director (or designee) and/or the ECB Branch Chief.

To the extent possible, all AHWOs/SWOS will adhere to the established and approved schedule. Exchanges of AHWO/SWO rotations (i.e., weeks) must be agreed to by both parties. It is the responsibility of each AHWO to make up any missed time in order to perform the complete number of hours that were originally scheduled during a 48-week cycle.

All schedule changes, both day and night, must be reflected in the calendar posted in the EOC WO station and the EOC Outlook Calendar (i.e., *OSWER OEM EOC Watch Officers* shared calendar). Documentation of actual hours worked by WOs is an important record-keeping requirement.

3.3 Guaranteed Coverage at the EOC

In the event a WO has to arrive late or leave early from a scheduled shift, the WOs should arrange for a substitute. This applies to a brief absence or for more extended periods of time (e.g., a day or more).

4.0 Watch Officer SOPs

The WO SOPs outlined below comprise the core responsibilities of WOs. The Job aids provide new WOs with guidance on how to complete their core responsibilities, as well as to serve as quick reference guides for experienced WOs. At times, several sequential steps may be outlined in the Job aids.

The *initial* and *closing responsibilities* sections ensure that all existing resources are available and ready for use and, more importantly, ensure that information exchange occurs between the DTWO and the AHWO. The *ongoing responsibilities* section will assist the applicable WO in maintaining situational awareness and managing the information that is received throughout the course of the rotation.

The EOC is EPA HQ's first point of contact for a number of environmental response and critical homeland security organizations, including EPA Regions, National Response Center (NRC), and National Operations Center (NOC). In addition, the WOs may obtain important information from the news media, citizens, and the internet. (See *Appendix A: Initial Notification Diagram for Threats Incidents, and Miscellaneous*)

Based on the information received, the WO determines whether to gather additional information or immediately brief/notify the ECB Chief. The PROD Director (or designee) will determine if additional notifications to EPA Senior Leadership are necessary (i.e., OEM Director, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER), and Administrator's Office, etc.).

Key Concept: Professional Judgment

Because every incident is unique, WOs must rely heavily on their best professional judgment. This is especially true when the WO receives an initial notification and must decide whether to immediately assess the situation further or notify the PROD Director. A lack of complete and accurate information will further complicate the decision-making process.

The principles outlined in *Job Aid 7: Notification Criteria and Process* are intended to provide the WO with guidance and should *not* be considered the final rule regarding the need for notification.

Key Term: Notification

Notifications to the EOC may occur by several means, including voice, email, and WebEOC. Notifications to the PROD Director or designee from the EOC other than through standard EOC products (daily/spot reports) should be verbal.

4.1 DTWO Officer Responsibilities

4.1.1 Initial Responsibilities

The following activities should be completed by the DTWO at the beginning of their shift:

- Confirm deactivation of call forwarding by contractor by checking the WO phone at 202-564-3850 (See *Job Aid 1: Call Forwarding*).
- Open and manage EOC e-mail (See *Job Aid 4: Managing the EOC Inbox*).
 - Review any messages from the AHWO/SWO.
 - Look for and review daily reports submitted by EPA Regions and forward to PROD Director (or designee), ECB Chief, and other staff, as appropriate (See *Appendix C: Regional Coordinators and Watch Officer Contacts*).
- Receive e-mail and/or verbal briefing from AHWO/SWO, as appropriate.
- Check EOC voicemail (See *Job Aid 2: EOC Voicemail Access* and *Job Aid 5: Managing Incoming Calls and Faxes*).
- Log into WebEOC (See *Job Aid 8: WebEOC*) to:
 - Review *Action Reports*.
 - Review *EOC Call Log*.
 - Review *Significant Events* entries.
- Ensure EOC Situation Board is posted to the plasma TV screen (See *Job Aid 19: EOC COP FlexViewer Quick Start*).
- Check EOC Calendar entries for the day (See *Job Aid 18: EOC Resource Requests and Calendar*).

4.1.2 Ongoing Responsibilities

The following activities will recur throughout the DTWO shift:

- Evaluate the need for additional incident information collection and notification (See *Job Aid 6: Incident Information Guide*).
- Prepare and distribute the EOC Daily Emergency Management Report (See *Job Aid 10: EPA EOC Daily Operations Report*).
- Maintain situational awareness of events and incidents.
- Answer EOC phone (See *Job Aid 5: Managing Incoming Calls and Faxes*).
- Monitor EOC e-mail (See *Job Aid 4: Managing the EOC Inbox*).
- Ensure EOC Situation Board is updated and current (See *Job Aid 19: EOC COP FlexViewer Quick Start*).
- Monitor TV news.
- Monitor *Action Reports*, *EOC Call Log* and *Significant Events* in WebEOC

Key Responsibility
Evaluate the need for additional information collection and notification. See <i>Job Aid 6: Incident Information Guide</i> .

- Monitor incoming faxes and notify appropriate individuals of content (See *Job Aid 5: Managing Incoming Calls and Faxes*).
- Monitor NAWAS (See *Job Aid 5: Managing Incoming Phone Calls and Faxes*).
- Monitor Internet websites for oil and Hazardous materials (HAZMAT) news reports (See *Appendix H: Important URLs and E-mails*).
- Refer conference room requests to EOC Scheduler and PROD Senior Environmental Employment (SEE) Support (See *Job Aid 18: EOC Resource Requests and Calendar*).
- Facilitate secure information transmittals (See *Job Aid 26: Sensitive (Classified) Information & Secure Communications*).
- Log incoming and outgoing EOC communications in WebEOC (See *Job Aid 9: Title Globe Telecommunications Test*).
- Change passwords when prompted during login (See *Job Aid 3: Outlook Desktop Client*). Password is changed every three months. Be sure to document the change for the other WOs.
- Maintain a running tally of significant incident notifications received by the EOC (See *Job Aid 10: EPA EOC Daily Operations Report*).
- As needed, and in working with the SWO, issue EOC Spot Reports and updates (See *Job Aid 12: EOC Spot Report*).

4.1.3 Closing Procedures

At close of daytime operations, the DTWO will:

- Clean up the WO station.
- Draft a summary of incident notifications and send to the AHWO and EOC inbox.
- Notify the EOC contractor to activate call forwarding to the appropriate AHWO (See *Job Aid 1: Call Forwarding*).

4.2 AHWO/SWO Responsibilities

4.2.1 Initial Responsibilities

The following activities should be completed by the AHWO at the beginning of their shift:

- Log-in to EOC workstation.
- Check-in with DTWO regarding incidents, actions, and status of EOC products.
- Pick up the AHWO Go Kit from the EOC, confirm contents and operability of equipment, and complete the checklist. A back up Go Kit is available in the PROD Director's office, if needed.
- Confirm that EOC IT Team has installed any necessary software updates on laptop.
- Log into HSIN—See *Job Aid 21: HSIN*

4.2.2 Ongoing Responsibilities

The following activities will recur throughout the AHWO shift:

- Review and approve any EOC products prior to distribution.
- As needed, assist with inter-Agency liaison activities.
- Support special situation coordination.
- Maintain distribution lists and update existing SOPs as needed.
- De-conflict meetings and resource requests.
- Provide breaks and other support to DTWO as needed.
- Evaluate the need for additional information collection and notification (See *Job Aid 6: Incident Information Guide*).
- Answer EOC phone (See *Job Aid 5: Managing Incoming Calls and Faxes*).
- Periodically monitor EOC e-mail and WebEOC (See *Job Aid 4: Managing the EOC Inbox*).
 - During weekday nights, the inbox should be checked in the evening and morning, and prior to going to sleep at night.
 - During weekends and holidays, the AHWO should maintain access to and monitor the EOC inbox.
 - Respond, forward, and file e-mails as appropriate.
 - An EOC iPhone can be used to monitor the EOC inbox.
- Facilitate secure information transmittals (See *Job Aid 26: Sensitive (Classified) Information & Secure Communications*).
- Log incoming and outgoing EOC communications in WebEOC (See *Job Aid 9: Title Globe Telecommunications Test*).
- Participate, as needed, in quarterly COOP exercises (See *Appendix L: OSWER COOP Notifications*).
- Document any significant notifications received during the shift following existing notification criteria.
- As directed, issue *Status Report* in response to inquiries from senior leadership on an incident and we DO NOT yet have enough information from the region to issue a Spot Report
 - Should be issued as a stand-alone email to the ECB Chief and including others OEM management as directed.
 - Should capture EPA coordination efforts and anticipated next steps.
 - Note: Since the report will likely be forwarded up the senior leadership chain, remove names of regional personnel and stick to known facts/timeline.
- If a significant event occurred, provide a verbal briefing to the DTWO at the start of his/her shift.
- Issue *Monday Morning Report* to ECB Chief to prepare OEM senior management for OSWER manager meeting
 - Should contain bulleted high-level summaries of any emergency response activities that the EPA EOC monitored over the weekend.
 - Should also anticipate ongoing reporting for any incidents the EPA EOC monitoring.

4.2.3 Closing Responsibilities

The following activities should be completed by the AHWO/SWO at the end of his/her shift:

- Clean-up WO workstation.
- Ensure all components are in the AHWO/SWO Go Kit and that the laptop, cell phone, and iPhone are fully charged.
- Provide laptop to EOC IT Team to have security and software updates installed.
- Provide the iPhone to EOC IT Team for synchronization.
- Notify the incoming AHWO/SWO that the Go Kit has been delivered to the EOC.

Note: If the EOC is activated during non-working hours, the AHWO will continue to provide after-hours logistical support until this function is taken over by the EOC.

For further IT assistance:

Desktop Support/Technical Support Contact Information

EOC Help Desk support is available Monday through Friday from 0700 - 1730 in the Data Center or by calling 202-250-8937.

EPA Call Center and After-hours Emergencies:

1-866-411-4372 (24 hours)

